

## Venice's Ceremonial Treatment of the Ottoman and Safavid Envoys in Comparative Perspective\*

### Osmanlı Ve Safevî Elçilerinin Venedik'te Kabul Törenleri Karşılaştırmalı Perspektifte

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#### Abstract

Taking a comparative perspective and drawing on the documents from the Venetian State Archives, the paper attempts to examine a ceremonial treatment of the Ottoman and Safavid diplomats in Venice. Both the Ottoman and Safavid envoys usually were graciously received in Venice. However, the degree of the Venetian hospitality was subject to changes and varied in accordance to the importance of the incoming mission and overall nature of its relations with the Ottomans and Safavids. It appears from the receptions of the Ottoman and Safavid diplomats in Venice that during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the ceremonial positions of the sultan's envoys were equal or mostly above that of the *Qızılbaş* representatives. As it is evident from the Safavid Asad bey's case in 1600, in its treatment of the Safavid envoys, Venetian government pursued a cautious policy and tried not to antagonize the Ottomans. Furthermore, the Ottoman factor had enduring impact both on the nature and on the dynamics of the Safavid-Venetian relations.

**Key words:** Safavid-Venetian relations, Ottoman-Venetian relations, Safavid envoys, early modern diplomacy, diplomatic ceremonial.

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### Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı Venedik Devlet Arşivi'nde bulunan belgeler ışığında Osmanlı ve Safevî elçilerinin Venedik'te kabul törenleri ve ağırlanması konusunu karşılaştırmalı bir perspektifte incelemektir. Hem Osmanlı hem de Safevî elçileri Venedik'te genellikle iyi bir şekilde karşılanırlardı. Ancak Venedik misafirperverliğinin derecesi değişime tabi olup, gelen misyonun önemine ve Osmanlılar ve Safevîler ile ilişkilerinin genel karakterine uygun olarak değişiyordu. Venedik'te Osmanlı ve Safevî elçilerinin kabul merasimlerinden on altıncı yüzyılda ve on yedinci yüzyılın başlarında Padişahın elçilerinin Kızılbaş temsilcileri ile eşit veya çoğunlukla daha üst seviyede karşılandıkları ve ağırlandıkları anlaşılmaktadır. 1600 yılındaki Safevî elçisi Esad bey örneğinde görüldüğü gibi, Venedik hükümeti Safevi temsilcilerine yaptığı muamelede Osmanlıları kendilerine karşı kıskırtmamak için ihtiyatlı bir politika izliyordu. Ayrıca Osmanlı faktörünün Safevîlerin Venedik Cumhuriyeti ile ilişkilerinin genel karakteri ve dinamikleri üzerinde kalıcı etkisi olmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Safevî -Venedik ilişkileri, Osmanlı-Venedik ilişkileri, Safevî elçileri, yeniçağ diplomasisi, diplomatik tören.

### 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, in the wake of the renewed interest in early modern diplomacy and shifting toward interdisciplinary approaches, the interactions between Europe and the Middle East have received considerable attention. The nature of these connections can be traced through the comprehensive examination of early modern diplomatic encounters of the Venetians with the Ottomans and the Safavids, *which cannot be grasped appropriately from a shallow historical or a monocultural perspective*.

The topic of Ottoman diplomatic missions to Venice was a subject of seminal studies by the late professor Maria Pia Pedani.<sup>1</sup> The emergence and evolution of diplomatic and cultural relations between the Safavid Empire and the Republic of Venice was examined by Giorgio Rota.<sup>2</sup> In his article on

<sup>1</sup> Maria P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore. Inviati ottomani a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla guerra di Candia*, Deputazione Editrice, Venezia, 1994; "Ambassadors' travels from the East to Venice", *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, 48 (2009), p.183-197; "Ottoman Diplomats in the West: the Sultan's Ambassadors to the Republic of Venice", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 11 (1996), p. 187-202.

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Rota, "Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice: an Overview", in Hasan Celâl Güzel et al. (eds.), *The Turks*, II, Yeni Türkiye

Safavid envoys in Venice, G. Rota briefly touches on the practical aspects of the envoys' sojourn in Venice.<sup>3</sup> Despite these advancements, no attempt has been made to study a ceremonial treatment of the Ottoman and Safavid diplomats in comparative perspective. Moreover, in spite of a "cultural turn" in the history of diplomacy and a growing interest in symbolic communication in diplomatic practices, there remains little scholarship on importance of ritual and ceremony in Safavid-Venetian diplomatic relations.

Taking a comparative perspective, we will focus on the elements of diplomatic ceremonies, particularly diplomatic rituals, intended audience of the diplomatic ceremonies, symbolic elements in ceremonial languages, differences and similarities of the Safavid and Ottoman missions to Venice, diplomatic hospitality practices of Venice. Venice's ceremonial treatment of the Ottoman and Safavid diplomats will be examined to provide insights into understanding of the position of Ottomans and Safavids in early modern international hierarchy. The patterns of changes in ceremonial practices of Venice and the Safavid Empire will be explored to reveal changes or continuity in the relations between these powers. As pointed out by W. Roosen: "Diplomatic ceremonial can serve as a barometer for long-term relationship between states".<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Itineraries of the Ottoman and Safavid envoys' travels to Venice

Depending on various factors, the duration of the Ottoman envoys' travels to Venice varied from twenty-five days to a couple of months. Since the travel to Venice involved a combination of land and sea voyage, weather and the sea conditions were among the factors that influenced the length of trip. Naturally, each journey had a different duration and route depending on where the court resided or military campaigns were conducted: in 1516, Mustafa, who departed from Konya, arrived in Venice after two-month travel via a road of Ragusa (Dubrovnik); in the same year, Mehmed setting off from Aleppo reached Venice in four months. It took forty days for Ali bey in 1517 to arrive from Edirne to Venice.<sup>5</sup> In spring of 1600, Davud çavuş's journey to Venice from the Ottoman-Habsburg front lasted two months.<sup>6</sup>

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Publications, Ankara, 2002, p. 580-587; *Under Two Lions. On the Knowledge of Persia in the Republic of Venice (ca. 1450-1797)*, Verlag der Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft, Vienna, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Rota, "Safavid Envoys in Venice", in *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Ralph Kauz, Giorgio Rota, Jan Paul Niederkorn, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 2009, p. 213-245.

<sup>4</sup> William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach", *The Journal of Modern History*, 52/3 (September 1980), p. 476.

<sup>5</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 46-47.

<sup>6</sup> Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASVe), Collegio, Esposizioni principi (hereafter CEP), reg. 14, c. 110r (15 May 1600).

As usual, Ottoman envoys that travelled through or from Istanbul, before leaving the capital paid a visit to the Venetian bailo who gave them a letter that certified their role.<sup>7</sup> Envoys mostly travelled on horseback until the Dalmatian coastal cities of Ragusa, Spalto (Split) or Zara (Zadar), where they left their horses and added other persons to their retinues in order to arrive in Venice with many servants and so impress their hosts. From the Dalmatian coast, the ambassadors usually went on in a Venetian ship.<sup>8</sup>

Safavid envoys arrived in Venice mainly by two routes, which were controlled by the Ottomans. 1) From Syrian ports of (a) Beirut, like the first Safavid envoy<sup>9</sup> in 1509 and (b) Alexandretta (Iskenderun), like Fathi bey<sup>10</sup> in 1603. Before reaching these ports envoys had to travel overland through Mesopotamia and Syria; 2) From Anatolia (Anadolu): (a) via Gelibolu and Balkans, like Haji Mahammad<sup>11</sup> in 1580 and (b) from Istanbul, like Khoja Shahuvar<sup>12</sup> in 1612. These routes were the shortest, but most complicated due to the political tensions between the *Qızılbaş*s and the Ottomans.

As a measure of disease prevention related to the plague, envoys had to spend some days in quarantine in one of the ports in Dalmatia or in one of the Lazarettos (quarantine station) of Venice before entering to the city. For example, Ottoman Davud çavuş, before arriving in Venice on 15 May 1600, had spent 18 days in quarantine in Lazaretto, near the city.<sup>13</sup> Safavid envoy Khoja Shahuvar performed quarantine (*far la contumacia*) in Spalto before proceeding to Venice in 1622.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Venetian diplomatic protocol and the reception of the Safavid and Ottomans envoys in Venice

Studying of diplomatic ceremonial has proved helpful in reassessing our knowledge of diplomatic relationships between European and non-European

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<sup>7</sup> Maria P. Pedani, *The Ottoman-Venetian Border (15th-18th Centuries)*, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, Venezia, 2017, p. 112; Eugenio Albèri (ed.), *Le Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato durante il secolo decimosesto*, serie III, vol. III, Società editrice fiorentina, Firenze, 1855, p. 49; ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli (hereafter *SDC*), fil. 2, c. 49r (14 April 1567).

<sup>8</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> Marino Sanudo, *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto (MCCCCXCVI–MDXXXIII) dall'autografo Marciano ital. cl. VII codd. CDXIX–CDLXXVII*, M. Visentini, Venezia, 1879 – 1903, VIII, col.14.

<sup>10</sup> ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Mar, fil. 157 (13 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>11</sup> ASVe, *CEP*, fil. 3 (1 May 1580), c. 329v.

<sup>12</sup> ASVe, *SDC*, fil. 74 (22 November 1612), c. 116r.

<sup>13</sup> ASVe, *CEP*, reg. 14, c. 110r (15 May 1600).

<sup>14</sup> Guglielmo Berchet (ed.), *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, G. B. Paravia, Torino, 1865, p. 213.

political entities.<sup>15</sup> On these occasions, each action on the part of the representatives of the Venetian republic was a carefully calculated gesture that recognized the distinctive office of the foreigner.<sup>16</sup> The actual contacts were not direct but rather were made through diplomatic agents who represented the sovereign. The reception of the foreign diplomats was a ceremonial affair manifesting respect for the principal whom they represented.<sup>17</sup> This was best described by the words of the Safavid envoy Fathi bey: “all the favors that will be done to me by the Venetian government will be bestowed on Shah.”<sup>18</sup> Hasan Çavuş who visited Venice two times, in 1576 and 1580, expressed his dissatisfaction with mistreatment in the following words: “being his [Sultan’s] slave, the honor that you would do to me would be done to my Lord [Sultan].<sup>19</sup> He also added that “any good or bad treatment that is done, not to him, but to those who sent him”.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Tuscan memorandum of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Venetian protocol was based on tradition and, at the same time, subject to changes, which usually reflected the modifications introduced in the diplomatic practice by the rulers who were sending envoys to the Republic.<sup>21</sup> In practice, the Venetian ceremonial entry defied rigid formulation. Although they shared structural similarities, no two entries were exactly alike in practice. Each was highly personalized and tailored to the specific guest and occasion, and subject to the exigencies of weather and tides.<sup>22</sup> Ceremonial receptions involving ambassadors from the Ottoman sultan were among the most scrupulously reported particularly in the Venetian historian Marin Sanudo’s diaries partly because of their exotic aspect, but also because the ambassadors always came for a particular often sensitive purpose and were never resident.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Tracey Sowerby, “Early Modern Diplomatic Studies”, *History Compass*, 14/9 (2016), p. 446.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981, p. 232.

<sup>17</sup> Donald E. Queller, “Early Venetian Legislation Concerning Foreign Ambassadors”, *Studies in the Renaissance*, XII (1965), p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> “*tutti li favori che S. Serenità farà a lui, saranno conferiti al medesimo Re*”. ASVe, CEP, fil. 13 (5 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>19</sup> “...detto che [...], l'onore che si farà a me si farà al mio S[ign]or, essendo io suo schiavo”. ASVe, CEP, fil. 3, c. 294r – v (25 June 1580); ASVe, *Annali*, fil. 7 c.18v (25 June 1580),

<sup>20</sup> “...et non veniva tenuto conto d'lui onde disse ogni bon o cattivo trattam[ent]o che si faccia, non si faccia a lui, ma a chi lo mandava”. ASVe, CEP, fil. 3, c. 296r – v (25 June 1580).

<sup>21</sup> G. Rota, “Safavid Envoys in Venice”, p. 216.

<sup>22</sup> Patricia Fortini Brown, “Measured Friendship, Calculated Pomp: The Ceremonial Welcomes of the Venetian Republic”, in *All the World’s a Stage: Art and Pageantry in the Renaissance and Early Baroque*, eds. Barbara Wisch and Susan Scott Munshower, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1990, p. 140.

<sup>23</sup> Patricia H. Labalme and Laura Sanguineti (ed.), *White Venice, Città Excelentissima: Selections from the Renaissance Diaries of Marin Sanudo*, Tr. Linda L. Carroll, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2008, p. 212.

Paolo Preto notes that the arrival of an Ottoman envoy in Venice was “an event of exceptional importance, both for its government and for all the population, especially in the early 16th century when public opinion was still under the shock of the resounding victories of the Ottomans in the Orient”.<sup>24</sup>

Both the Safavid and the Ottoman courts attached utmost importance to ceremonial reception of the foreign envoys and other numerous and splendid ceremonial occasions, which were designed to show the magnificence of the respective sovereign’s power. For example, at the Ottomans, for the sake of giving an impression of wealth and magnificence, occasions, such as the *uluşe* (salary) day of the Janissaries, when they received three-monthly salaries, were frequently coincided with the dates of the reception of ambassadors.<sup>25</sup> At the Safavid court, the majesty of the ruler was visualized, among other things, through the invitation of foreign guests to feasts and festivities that were presided over by the shah.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.1. Welcome on the Lido

It was a custom to assign Venetian nobles to meet and accompany foreign envoys and other distinguished visitors to Venice—as much for the purpose of watching them as for honoring them.<sup>27</sup> Ottoman envoys were usually welcomed on the Lido shore<sup>28</sup>, in the so-called ‘red house’ (*casa rossa*) of the Council of Ten<sup>29</sup> by a deputation, consisting mainly of members of the Venetian Senate. It was difficult, however, to find Venetian nobles willing to sacrifice valuable time for such an assignment.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Senate required that nobles who failed in this duty would face a fine of 10 ducats.<sup>31</sup> While, the most of the diplomatic representatives of the European powers were greeted at the islands of Santo

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<sup>24</sup> Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Sansoni, Firenze, 1975, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Rycaut, *The present state of the Ottoman Empire: containing the maxims of the Turkish polity, the most material points of the Mahometan religion [...], their military discipline*, John Starkey and Henry Brome, London, 1670, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Michele Membré, *Relatione presentata a di. v lulio per mano de Michael Membre retornato dal Signor Sophi de Persia*, ASVe, Collegio, Relazioni, b. 25, 1542, f.31; Olearius, Adam, *The voyages and travells of the ambassadors sent by Frederick, Duke of Holstein, to the Great Duke of Muscovy and the King of Persia begun in the year M.DC.XXXIII. and finish'd in M.DC.XXXIX*, John Starkey and Thomas Basset, London, 1669, p. 200, 206.

<sup>27</sup> D.E. Queller, “Early Venetian Legislation Concerning Foreign Ambassadors”, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, V, col. 980; XXIII, col. 361; LII, col. 369-360.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, LII, col. 393. In some welcome events the author of ‘Diari’, Marin Sanudo was also took part personally. “tra li qual io Marin Sanudo”. *Ibid.*, XXIII, col. 343-344.

<sup>30</sup> D.E. Queller, “Early Venetian Legislation Concerning Foreign Ambassadors”, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XXIII, col. 373; XXXII, col. 67. The ducat of Venice of pure gold was first struck in 1284 at a weight of 3.56 gm.

Spirito<sup>32</sup> and Santa Maria della Grazia<sup>33</sup>, the diplomats from the Ottoman and Mamluk empires were welcomed at the island of Lido. However, the available sources do not provide any evidence concerning the Safavid envoys' landing at Lido.

The size of the Venetian delegation charged with greeting an envoy was not fixed and varied in accordance with the importance of the mission and status of the envoy. Usually, the embassies that charged with the important task of confirming or negotiating peace were welcomed by larger deputations. For example, in March of 1504, Ottoman envoy Yakub bey was welcomed by thirty nobles (*gentilbomeni*)<sup>34</sup> and in 1514 Ali bey by forty Venetians consisted mainly of members of the Senate.<sup>35</sup> However, Mustafa bey, who was sent to receive the Tuks captured by the Venetians, was met by the dragoman alone.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2. Reception at the Venetian College

Usually, the Ottoman envoys appeared before the College after two days of their arrival.<sup>37</sup> Yet it was not always the case for the Safavid representatives. For example, despite the Venetian College was informed of Safavid Asad bey 's arrival in Venice on 29 May 1600<sup>38</sup>, they granted him an audience only on 8 June.<sup>39</sup> The reason was that at the same time the Ottoman envoy Davud çavuş was in Venice and Asad bay's audience with the Dodge had been purposefully delayed until the çavuş left the city.<sup>40</sup>

In their first audience at the College, Ottoman envoys were accompanied by members of the Senate.<sup>41</sup> Their size and rank of the participants also depended on the importance of the mission and of the status of the envoy. In June 1512, Ottoman envoy Semiz çavuş and in January 1514 Ali bey were accompanied by 40 nobles, including the senators.<sup>42</sup> In 1595, 30 senators kept the company with çeşnigir Hüseyin aga who came to Venice to announce the

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<sup>32</sup> ASVe, Collegio, Ceremoniali (hereafter *CC*), reg. 1, c.86r (19 September 1578); ASVe, *CC*, reg.1, c.86v (29 October 1578).

<sup>33</sup> ASVe, *CC*, reg.1, c.88v (19 January 1578, *more veneto*); ASVe, *CC*, reg.1, c.89r (29 July 1579).

<sup>34</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, V, col. 980.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII, col. 509.

<sup>36</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 57.

<sup>37</sup> ASVe, Senato, Secreta, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli (hereafter *SDeLC*), fil. 14 (23 June 1618), unpaginated.

<sup>38</sup> ASVe, *CEP*, reg. 14, c.111v (18 May 1600).

<sup>39</sup> ASVe, *CEP*, fil. 11 (8 June 1600), unpaginated.

<sup>40</sup> ASVe, *CEP*, reg. 14, c.111r-v (18 May 1600).

<sup>41</sup> ASV, *SDeLC*, fil. 14 (23 June 1618), unpaginated; M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, LII, col. 367.

<sup>42</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XIV, col. 410-11; XVII, col. 521.

enthronement of III Mehmed (r.1595-1603) and renewal of the peace agreement with the Serenissima.<sup>43</sup> However, in 1600, Davud çavuş, whose visit was aimed to retrieve the merchandise of the deceased Ottoman merchant, was accompanied to the College only by the public dragoman.<sup>44</sup>

In several cases, the former *baili* (resident ambassador) in Istanbul were also present in the company of the senators welcoming an envoy in Lido and escorting the Ottoman envoys to the Collegio. For example, Leonardo Bembo (bailage:1503-08) was among the delegation welcoming Ali bey in January 1514, escorting him to the College, as well as taking him to the popular sights of the city.<sup>45</sup> Ex- baili Tommaso Contarini (b.1519-22) and Pietro Bragadin (b.1524-26) were assigned to meet and accompany Yunus bey, Sultan's interpreter in December of 1529.<sup>46</sup>

Little is known concerning the circumstances of the announcement of the arrival of the Safavid envoys and other events that took place before their first public audience in the College. In most cases, the arrival of the Safavid envoys, like of their Ottoman colleagues, was announced by the Public Dragoman of the Republic.<sup>47</sup> His duties were multifaceted: (i) accompanying Ottoman or Safavid envoys on audiences, (ii) interpreting the speeches of envoys at the College, (iii) translating official letters sent by the Ottoman sultans or Safavid shahs; (iv) assisting envoys throughout their Venetian sojourns. As for the procession of the Safavid envoys towards the Ducal Palace, we only know that in 1509, the second envoy and his retinue of four persons were accompanied into the College by *Savi agli Ordini*.<sup>48</sup> While the Ottoman envoy in a company of the Venetian delegation passed through St. Marc's Square and many people came to see the ambassador's procession.<sup>49</sup>

As the envoy entered the *Sala del Collegio*, the Doge and all the Members of the College usually rose up from their seats.<sup>50</sup> It is evident from the Sanudo's *Diari* that the dodes in most instances descended from his throne in the College to meet the Ottoman envoys. The first audiences of the Safavid and Ottoman envoys were similar in nature and consisted mainly of the following elements: (1) welcome words by the Dodge; (2) envoys' conveyance of the greetings of the Shah/Sultan; (3) statement of the aim of the mission; (4) the delivery of the Shah's/Sultan's letters; (5) the presentation of gifts to the Doge;

<sup>43</sup> ASVe, CEP, reg. 11, c. 82r (20 June 1595).

<sup>44</sup> ASVe, CEP, reg. 14, 111r (18 May 1600).

<sup>45</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XVII, col. 509, 521, 543.

<sup>46</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, LII, col. 359-360, 367

<sup>47</sup> ASVe, CEP, reg. 14, 112v (29 May 1600); ASVe, CEP, fil. 13 (5 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>48</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, VIII, col. 255.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., XIV, col. 411; 17, 521, 529; 23, 373-74.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., XVII, col. 521; 23, 574.



(5) exchanging the customary words of kindness and respect and expressing hopes for an enduring friendship between the two states. After the usual compliments, the envoy took his leave. The retinue accompanied the envoy to his lodgings in Venice. In some instances, Ottoman envoys made inquiry after the doge's health at the reception and informing him that the Sultan was well.<sup>51</sup>

The foreign ambassadors, including Safavid and Ottoman envoys were usually seated next to the Doge, on his right, located above that of the *Savi di Terraferma*.<sup>52</sup> This was the place where the oldest ducal councilor usually sat. On both sides of the Doge and the envoy were seated the Doge's six counselors. Interestingly, it appears from Gabriele Caliani's famous painting of the reception of the Safavid legation in 1603 that four members of the Safavid mission were seated next to the Doge, two on each side. As it is evident from the description of the first public audience of Fathi bey, envoys remained standing while addressing the doge.<sup>53</sup> When the Doge was absent, the eldest member of the Ducal Council presided over the College. This was the case with audience given for Shahsuvar during his second visit in 1622.<sup>54</sup>

In some instances, the Safavid envoys expressed their views about the personality of the Venetian doges. Fathi bey "was delighted to see a face" of the doge Marino Grimani, whom he described as a "just, powerful, and glorious" sovereign. Haji Mahammad, aged 80, when appeared before the 89-year-old doge Nicolò da Ponte, was so excited that to say in his own words, his "legs trembled" (*tremava le gambe*).<sup>55</sup>

Most of the Safavid official letters dispatched to Venice were composed in Persian, with few exceptions of the missives issued in Turkish. While the Sublime Porte's primary language of correspondence with the Serenissima was Ottoman Turkish, in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was common for the sultans' envoys to present the imperial letters issued in Greek.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4. Symbolic elements in reception ceremonies

Non-verbal communications and physical layout of the surroundings carried importance in early modern Venetian diplomatic ceremonial. The great variety of elements, rich clothing, rare and expensive gifts-all served the purpose of demonstrating the importance of the occasion.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., XIV, col. 411.

<sup>52</sup> ASVe, CC, reg. 2, c. 41r; M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XVII, col. 522.

<sup>53</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 13 (5 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>54</sup> G. Berchet (ed.), *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, p.212.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>56</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XIV, col. 411; XXV, col. 52.

<sup>57</sup> W. Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach", p. 467.

#### 4.1. Dresses

It seems that there were defined rules on the material and color of dress distinguishing the ranks of the Venetian government officials. The dodges and high-ranking officials, as well as the holders of the title of *'sier'* typically were dressed in velvet (*veludo*)<sup>58</sup> robes. In most cases, the Senate members wore scarlet (*scarlato*)<sup>59</sup> and partly silk (*seda*) garments.<sup>60</sup> The ceremonial dresses of the Venetian delegation who accompanied the envoys to the Collegio were also distinguished in accordance to their social standing. For example, while the most of the Pregadi (Senate) members escorting the Ottoman envoy Ali bey were dressed in scarlet, three cavaliers wore silk robes, *bailo* Leonardo Bembo and *sier* Paolo Valaresso black velvet (*veludo negro*).<sup>61</sup> According to Sanudo, all members of the College “dressed well” for the reception of the Ottoman envoy Yakup bey.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.2. Ritual of letter delivery

The importance of the royal correspondence for the Safavids could be best exemplified with the words of Fathi bey, Shah Abbas's envoy to the Serenissima:

*“The great rulers visit each other through the medium of the letters and in this way, they confirm and enhance the friendship and good correspondence that they have together”.*<sup>63</sup>

The similar phrase was used by the Dodge Loredan in 1504 during the audience given for Ottoman envoy Yakup bey: “through the medium of the [sultan's] letter he would see (visit) also [his] land”.<sup>64</sup>

Letter presentation ritual was an important part of early modern diplomatic practice. In Safavid tradition, any written communication of the Shah was regarded as an object of respect. The Safavid envoys were instructed not to show the content of the shah's letter to anyone before presenting it personally to the ruler of the host power. It was essential for the Safavid envoy, a representative of the Safavid shah, to deliver the letter directly into the hands of the foreign rulers.

<sup>58</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XIV, col. 411; XVII, col. 529; XXIII, col. 374.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., V, col. 990; XIV, col. 411.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., XXIII, col. 374.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., XVII, col. 521.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., V, col. 990.

<sup>63</sup> *“I principi grandi visitarsi l'un l'altro col mezzo delle lettere, per confirmar ed accrescer di questa maniera l'amicitia et buona corrispondenza che hanno insieme”.* ASVe, Annali, fil. 13, c.1r. (March 1603); ASVe, CEP, fil. 13, 5 March 1603, unpaginated.

<sup>64</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, V, col. 991.

As a mark of reverence, Safavid envoys kissed the Shah's letter, and put it to their foreheads before handing it over to foreign rulers. As required by the Safavid custom, shah's envoys to Venice usually presented their sovereign's missives in accordance with their own protocol. Fathi bey's audience with the Venetian Doge in 1603 gave evidence for this ritual:

*"[...] since he had been ordered to present it [letter] into the hands of the Doge, he drew it from his chest, where he kept it in a red silk bag embroidered in silver, kissed it and presented it to the Doge".*<sup>65</sup>

This custom was not only reserved to the Safavid envoys, as the Ottoman envoys visiting Venice consigned the Sultan's letters into the hands of the Doge and usually kissed the letter before handing it over to the Venetian rulers.<sup>66</sup> For example, in 1600, Ottoman envoy Davud çavuş, at the audience in the Venetian College was reported telling that the Ottoman grand vizier Damat Ibrahim Paşa ordered him to deliver his letter directly into the hands of the Doge.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.3. Hand kissing and reverence

Hand kissing ritual as a part of the diplomatic ceremony in reception ceremonies was observed in early modern courts. In Venetian College, no one except a foreign ambassador was permitted to kiss Doge's hand.<sup>68</sup> In some cases, envoys kissed the hem of his robe.<sup>69</sup> It was also an established etiquette at the Safavid<sup>70</sup> and Ottoman<sup>71</sup> courts according to which foreign ambassador was expected to kiss the host sovereign's hand during the audiences with him.

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<sup>65</sup> *"havendogli comandato di presentargliela in propria mano, et così presa la lettera [...] la basciò, et presentò in mano di Sua Serenità"*. ASVe, CEP, fil. 13, (5 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>66</sup> *"[Mustafa Çavuş] dalla convinientia delle sue Imperiali lettere, le quali presenti in mano as sua Serenità dentro una borsa di panno d'oro"*. ASVe, SDeLC, fil. 14 (4 March 1618), unpaginated; ASVe, CEP, reg. 14, c.111r (18 May 1600).

<sup>67</sup> ASVe, CEP, reg. 14, c.111r (18 May 1600).

<sup>68</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 11 (8 June 1600), unpaginated; ASVe, CEP, fil. 13 (5 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>69</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 18 (30 January 1609, *more veneto*), unpaginated; *"Mustafa Chiaus manadto con le lettere del Signor Turco ... quando fù à mezza la sala di .. Eccellentissimo Collegio con veloce corso, come acostamano turchi, quando vengono persone grandi,.... venne à baciare la veste di Sua Serenità"*. ASVe, SDeLC, fil. 14 (4 March 1618), unpaginated.

<sup>70</sup> In an instruction (*nakaž*), dated 23 May 1618, given to the Russian embassy was indicated that embassy had to observe the all principles of the ceremonial at the Safavid court, including "kissing the shah's hand but not his foot". Nikolai I. Veselovsky (ed.), *Pamyatniki diplomaticheskikh i torgovykh snosheniy Moskovskoy Rusi s Persiyey* [Monuments of diplomatic and trade relations of Moscow Russia with Persia], III, *Tovarishchestvo parovoy skoropchatni Yablonskiy i Perott, Sankt-Peterburg, 1898*, p. 307.

## 5. Venetian Diplomatic Hospitality

Diplomatic hospitality was a vital element of early modern diplomatic culture and served the various purposes ranged from honouring the the foreign envoys to displaying the wealth, power a glorious picture, as well as the international status of the host power. Venetian hospitality was not just motivated by the rules of courtesy, rather, it served a clear political agenda and the degree of hospitality was determined by the nature of the diplomatic mission and the status of the ambassador's sovereign.<sup>72</sup>

### 5.1. Accommodation of the Ottoman and Safavid envoys

Following the welcome ceremony, the Venetian magistrates escorted a Sultan's envoy to his fully furnished lodgings (*casa fornita*) prepared by the officials of *Rason Vecchie*,<sup>73</sup> usually on the Giudecca island.<sup>74</sup> Its physical characteristics as an island, made it easier for Venetians to keep envoys under control and limit their contacts with local people, since a surveillance was not as easy job to do for the houses located in the city center. It is no surprise, therefore, that of the sixty-two known residences of the Sultan's envoys thirty-five were located on the Giudecca.<sup>75</sup> *Ca' Pisani*, *Ca' Malipiero*, *Ca' Gritti*, *Ca' Pasqualigo*<sup>76</sup>, *Ca' Morosini*, *Ca' Priuli*, *Ca' Mocenigo* were the among the famous lodgings.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, some of the envoys were provided with gondolas.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ogier Ghiselin Busbecq, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, 1522-1592*, translated by Charles Thornton Forster, Francis Daniell, , London: C.K. Paul, 1881., 353. Both Contemporary Ottoman chroniclers and Venetian baili mentioned the Safavid envoys kissing the hands of Ottoman sultans (*paye-i serir-i saltanata yüz sürmek*) and the skirt of the robe (*dâmen-bûsî*). Mehmet İpşirli (ed.), *Tarih-i Selânikî (971–1003/1563–1595)*. 2 vols., I, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, Istanbul, 1989, I, p. 219, II, p. 446; Kâtib Çelebi, *Fezleke [Osmanlı Tarihi (1000-1065/1591-1655)]*, II, edit. Zeynep Aycibin Çamlıca Basım Yayın, Istanbul, p. 448-49; ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Rubriche (hereafter *SDCRubr.*), D2, fols. 52a (20 August 1580); ASVe, *SDCRubr.*, D4, fols. 49a (12 September 1591); ASVe. *SDC*, fil. 60, c. 176v (29 November 1604).

<sup>72</sup> Laura Mesotten, "A Taste of Diplomacy: Food Gifts for the Muscovite Embassy in Venice (1582)", *Legatio. The Journal for Renaissance and Early Modern Diplomatic Studies*, I (2017), p. 133.

<sup>73</sup> *Ufficiali alle Rason Vecchie* was a Venetian bureau in charge of the hosting and entertaining foreign visitors. Andrea Da Mosto, *L' Archivio di Stato di Venezia: Indice generale, storico, descrittivo ed analitico*, I, Biblioteca d'arte ed., Roma, 1937, p.139.

<sup>74</sup> Girolamo Priuli, *I diarii (1494–1512)*, ed. Roberto Cessi, II, Nicola Zanichelli, Bologna, 1921-1941, p. 338; M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, V, col. 947, 980; XVII, col. 510; XXV, col. 49; II, ol. 499; ASV, *SDeLC*, fil. 14 (23 June 1618), unpaginated; ASVe, *SDeLC*, fil. 9 (8 June 1595), unpaginated.

<sup>75</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> In 1507, Mamluk ambassador Taghri Berdi also lodged at a house of *Ca' Pasqualigo* on Giudecca island. M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, VI, col. 424.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, II, col. 499; V, col. 980; XVII, col. 493; XXV, col. 49.

Following the envoys' arrival, the expenses during their stay in Venice were borne by the Venetian government through its office of *Rason Vecchie* and the officials of this bureau tried to make their stay as pleasant as possible<sup>79</sup>. Usually, the Venetian Republic offered free accommodation to Ottoman envoys in fully furnished residences. However, this was not true for all Ottoman envoys, as some of them had to make their own housing arrangements. For example, In 1580 Hasan stayed there for several days, at his own expense, since no lodging had been arranged for him in Venice and indeed the Senate had given orders to reduce the contribution for his stay to the bare minimum.<sup>80</sup>

Venetian sources provide fragmentary information about the accommodation of the Safavid envoys. While we lack evidence about the lodging of the first Safavid envoy, from Sanudo's *diari* we know that the second Safavid embassy was lodged at the Ca' Barbaro (now Palazzo Barbaro) near the square (*campo*) of San Stefano in San Marco quarter (*sestiere*), where a French envoy lived.<sup>81</sup> In 1580, Haji Mahammad stayed at the house of Zen (*cha Zen*), on the small square (*corte*) of San Giovanni Novo (*San Zuanne Novo*), in the quarter of Castello, near the San Marco.<sup>82</sup> Fathi bey, who visited Venice in 1603, sojourned at the house near the square of San Marco (*Capo Piazzetta*).<sup>83</sup> Khoja Safar, in 1610, stayed in an inn room (*camera locante*) at the Santi Apostoli.<sup>84</sup>

The above evidence suggests that the Safavid envoys tended to stay in the commercial quarters of the Venice near the Rialto Bridge and San Marco square. Obviously, the nature of their missions and their merchant backgrounds were decisive in choosing these areas. Like the Safavid envoys, some Ottoman delegates were also lodged in one of the quarters (*sestieri*) of the city.<sup>85</sup> At the end of the sixteenth century, if they had choice, sultan's envoys like their Safavid counterparts preferred the neighborhood of San Marco, particularly the area of Santa Maria Formosa, where Ottoman merchants used to reside in the city at that time.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Whereas in 1576, Ottoman envoy Hasan çavuş was provided with one gondola, Mehmet Çavuş, who visited Venice in June of 1618 was given two gondolas. ASVe, CC, reg. 2, c.41r; ASVe, SDeLC, fil. 14 (23 June 1618) unpaginated; ASVe, SDeLC, fil. 9 (8 June 1595), unpaginated.

<sup>79</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, V, col. 980.

<sup>80</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 56.

<sup>81</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, VIII, col. 232.

<sup>82</sup> G. Berchet (ed.), *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, p. 191.

<sup>83</sup> ASVe, Quarentia criminal, fil. 114, 1603 (03 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>84</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 18, 30 January 1609 (*more veneto*), unpaginated.

<sup>85</sup> Khalil Çavuş was lodged in a house in Santa Luca above Grand Canal. ASVe, CEP, fil. 12 (27 May 1602), unpaginated.

<sup>86</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 61

### 5.2. Food and diplomacy

Scholars have increasingly emphasized the connection between food and diplomacy. Offering food and refreshments (*refrescamenti*) to foreign envoys was an essential part of Venetian diplomatic hospitality. These food provisions were of crucial importance to Venetian hospitality strategies and can be considered as the first diplomatic gifts that ambassadors received.<sup>87</sup> The role of the food diplomacy in resolving conflicts was appreciated by the Venetians and they used this tool effectively to improve their relations, particularly with the Ottomans.<sup>88</sup> The Venetian baili in Istanbul used gifts of rare food items and sumptuous public banquets to maintain the reputation of the republic in the Porte.<sup>89</sup>

Refreshments offered to the foreign envoys comprised mainly fine sugar, *zucchari* (sugar confections), various types of nuts, famous Piacenza cheese, fresh fruits herbs and spices.<sup>90</sup> All these components were arranged into small packages and the average amount spent on one package of food gifts during the second half of the sixteenth and first quarter of the eighteenth century was twenty-five ducats.<sup>91</sup> In June 1580, Ottoman envoy Müsliheddin hoca received one-time food allowance of 25 ducats.<sup>92</sup>

Available documents suggest that the amount of the refreshments (*refrescamenti*) offered to the Safavid envoys were the same, which constituted 100 ducats<sup>93</sup>, irrespective of the size of their retinue. The exception was the embassy of Fathi bey of 1603. Due to their longer stay (more than 6 months) in Venice, in accordance to the decision of the Senate, dated 14 August 1603, a sum of 200 ducats<sup>94</sup> was allotted in addition to the previous one of 100 ducats given in early March of the same year. As it is evident from the case of Safavid

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<sup>87</sup> L. Mesotten, "A Taste of Diplomacy", p. 134.

<sup>88</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 59; Eric R. Dursteler, "A Continual Tavern in My House: Food and Diplomacy in Early Modern Constantinople" in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors*, ed. Machtelt Israels and Louis A. Waldman, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2013, p. 168-169.

<sup>89</sup> E.R. Dursteler, "A Continual Tavern in My House", p. 166.

<sup>90</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p.92.

<sup>91</sup> ASV, Senato, Secreta, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, fil. 14 (23 June 1618); L. Mesotten, "A Taste of Diplomacy", p. 147; Horatio F. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, Volume 10, 1603-1607, "Norfolk Chronicle" Co., London, 1900, p. 88, 184.

<sup>92</sup> ASVe, CC, reg. 1, c.93v (4 June 1580).

<sup>93</sup> Riccardo Predelli (ed.), *I libri Commemorativi della Repubblica di Venezia*, Regesti, VII, A spese della Società, Venezia, 1907, p. 63, 107; G. Berchet (ed.), *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, p, 48

<sup>94</sup> G. Berchet (ed.), *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, p, 198.

envoy Fathi bey, the food allowances were provided in parts (*parte a parte*).<sup>95</sup> Offering food gifts gave the Venetians another opportunity to promote local or regional products. In other words, diplomacy contributed to the foreign diplomats' culinary awareness of the local food culture.

Entertaining important foreign envoys with dinner parties was a vital feature of diplomatic ceremonial in Venice. In addition to the refreshments, splendid banquets were arranged to honour the prominent Ottoman envoys. In most cases, these banquets were hosted in the Arsenal, a complex of shipyards and armories and was considered as a symbol of the maritime power. Venetian nobles used to contend for the honor of hosting the most prominent foreign representatives, even for a single evening.<sup>96</sup> If a Venetian wanted to give a feast for such a foreigner, it was necessary to obtain permission of the Signory.<sup>97</sup>

### 5.3. Maintenance allowances

Economics of diplomacy, among other items, covers also lodging and upkeep for foreign visitors. All allowances for foreign envoys were determined by the Venetian Senate. While in Venice, the expenses of receiving embassies was funded by public money, in both the Safavid and Ottoman empires it was covered by the respective ruler's treasury. A senatorial decree of 1476 forbade the *Signory* or the College to spend more than twenty-five ducats for honoring any lord, orator, or other dignitary without the consent of two-thirds of the Senate.<sup>98</sup> Although the Senate tried to minimize the gifts and other expenses made for the benefit of foreign ambassadors, many exceptions, however, were made by special act, particularly in favor of Ottoman ambassadors.<sup>99</sup>

In determining daily allowances, the decisions of the Venetian Senate seem to have been mainly influenced by the two decisive factors: the size of the entourage and the rank of the guest. In 1509, the second Safavid envoy was given two ducats a day<sup>100</sup> for his expenses and for those of his retinue of 4 persons<sup>101</sup>. Venetian sources sometimes called this kind of allowance "food expenses" (*spese di bocca*) and this evidence suggest that the Senate calculated daily allowances according to the number of the "mouths" (*boche*) i.e. persons. As in this and other cases we examined, the determinant factor in fixing daily allowances for foreign envoys seems to have been the the size of the envoy's

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p, 198.

<sup>96</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p.78-79

<sup>97</sup> D.E. Queller, "Early Venetian Legislation Concerning Foreign Ambassadors, p. 13

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 13-14.

<sup>100</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, VIII, col. 432.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., VIII, col. 255.

retinue rather than the rank of envoy. Variations according to the size can easily be seen from the following examples regarding the Ottoman missions to Venice:

In December 1514, Mehmed *sipahioglan*, accompanied by 18 persons, received 6 ducats a day<sup>102</sup>; in 1516, Mehmed bey, with a company of 10 attendants was granted 5 ducats per day<sup>103</sup>; in 1520, Ahmed, with his entourage of 8, was given 4 ducats per diem<sup>104</sup>; in 1529, Yunus bey travelled with 19 followers was paid at the rate of 8 ducats daily.<sup>105</sup> The rank of an envoy, which was a decisive factor in determining the amount of the gifts of money or dress, played a secondary role in defining the rate of maintenance allowances for foreign envoy. For instance, the same Yunus bey, mentioned above, while in his first mission to Venice in 1519, in his capacity as *sipahioglan* received 3 ducats for himself and for his 6 attendants<sup>106</sup>, in his forth mission in 1533, as an interpreter, he received 10 ducats per diem for his entourage of 27 persons<sup>107</sup>. In contrast, while in his first mission he was granted a robe valued at 200 ducats,<sup>108</sup> in his fourth visit, he was presented a robe priced at 1000 ducats<sup>109</sup>. In 1581, Hasan ağa *çeşnigir* was given 10 ducats for his company of 11 persons, including his son.<sup>110</sup>

It should be noted that irrespective of the size of the embassy, the maximum amount of the daily allowance constituted 10 ducats. This could also be verified by example of Mamluk embassy of 1507 to Venice. The chief interpreter of the Mamluk sultan, Taghri Berdi (Tanrıverdi), was paid by the Cottimi of Alexandria and Damascus at the rate of 150<sup>111</sup>-250<sup>112</sup> ducats a month for his expenses and those of his retinue of 20 persons (*boche*)<sup>113</sup>. If we divide it into 28 or 30 days, it would appear that the daily amount provided to Mamluk embassy also was not bigger than the maximum sum of 10 ducats.

Despite inflation, a similar fluctuation persisted also in the following century.<sup>114</sup> For example, in 1618, Mehmet Çavuş and his retinue was given 10

<sup>102</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XIX, col. 300.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., XXIII, col. 361

<sup>104</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XXIX, col. 397.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., LII, col. 408.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., XXVI, col. 249.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., LVII, col. 305, 413.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., XXVI, col. 377.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., LVII, col. 413.

<sup>110</sup> ASVe, CC, reg. 1, c. 104v-105r (24 October 1581).

<sup>111</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, VI, col. 425;

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., VI, col. 458;

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., VI, col. 354;

<sup>114</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 59.



ducats per day for food allowances.<sup>115</sup> In 1609, *müteferrika* Haji Ibrahim was given a lodging and three sequins a day for his three servants.<sup>116</sup> In 1633, Mehmet Agha, sent by Pasha of Buda to Venice was given 6 *zecchini* per day by the *Rason Vecchie*.<sup>117</sup> It is obvious that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the per-diem amount provided varied according to the size of his entourage, however, the daily rate of the allowance was never over than 10 ducats for the whole embassy.

It is evident from the *Diari* of Sanudo that Venetian government allotted daily allowances to the envoy's immediate attendants. For example, In February 1514, interpreter Ali bey was granted daily 10 ducats for his own retinue of 28 persons, not for all those who attended him.<sup>118</sup> If an envoy was arrested, the daily allowance was taken back from him. For example, by a resolution of the Senate dated 6 March 1570, Ottoman envoy Mahmud bey and of all his attendants were arrested. Furthermore, the diplomatic allowance of ten ducats a day was also taken from him.<sup>119</sup>

## 6. Envoys' requests and complaints

### a) Requests

In 1600, Asad bey, made an appeal for exemption from the prohibition regarding the dyeing of fabrics he brought with him. Moreover, he made a request for a letter of recommendation to the brokers (*sanseri*) through the medium of whom he wanted to sell his merchandise.<sup>120</sup> In 1622, Khoja Shahsuvar while expressing his wish regarding the speed of the Venetian galleys operating between the Dalmatian coast and Venice noted that "it would be very convenient for merchants who mostly using this [Split] route if the galleys assigned to it sailed more speedily on that trip".<sup>121</sup>

Some Ottoman envoys requested for additional days to stay in Venice. In his last audience in the College, Mehmet Ağa expressed his gratitude to the Venetian government for their hospitality and taking him to see Arsenal and other places. Furthermore, he asked the Doge to give him permission to stay in Venice for extra two days in order to see other curious things in the city. His request received a favorable response from the Doge.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> ASVe, *SDeLC*, fil. 14 (23 June 1618), unpaginated.

<sup>116</sup> Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 11, 1607-1610, edit., by Horatio F. Brown, Mackie and Co. LD., London, 1904, p. 325.

<sup>117</sup> ASVe, *SDeLC*, reg. 22, c. 97v (18 August 1633).

<sup>118</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XVII, col. 529.

<sup>119</sup> ASVe, *SDeLC*, reg. 4, c. 32v (6 March 1570).

<sup>120</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 11, 8 June 1600, unpaginated.

<sup>121</sup> G. Berchet (ed.), *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia*, p. 213.

<sup>122</sup> ASVe, *SDeLC*, reg. 22, c. 99v (20 August, 1633).

*b) Complaints*

The Ottoman envoys attached the utmost importance to being received with the highest protocol in the foreign capitals and considered any negligent treatment by their hosts a humiliation of the Ottoman Sultan and the state they represented.<sup>123</sup> Despite the rich gifts in cash or present that they received in Venice, some envoys were dissatisfied with the treatment. Complaints about the inadequacy of gifts of money occasionally were heard from the Ottoman envoys sent to Venice. For example, Ottoman envoy Mehmed, who visited Venice in December of 1514, refused to accept 400 ducats' worth gifts and wanted the ones worth 1,000 ducats as was given to previous ambassador to Venice, Ali bey.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, he complained that he was not given a gold crimson coat lined in sable like the one given to the same Ali bey.<sup>125</sup> Mehmed's complaints were not unique. Hasan Çavuş who visited Venice two times, in 1576 and 1580, complained that he was not treated well as it was on his first visit and like other envoys sent by the Sultan.<sup>126</sup> It appears that the finance stood also at the core of Hasan's complaint. While in 1576 he had been granted a money gift of 500 ducats, in his second visit he received only 200 ducats, far below his expectations.<sup>127</sup>

There is some evidence that Venice were considered expensive for travelers. For instance, a Safavid merchant, in his draft letter addressed to the Doge, described Venice as a very expensive city.<sup>128</sup> In early modern Venice, the costs of foreign embassies' maintenance were borne by the Republic. However, from the numerous complaints of the ambassadors, we know that in early modern Europe, including Venice, the allowances for foreign embassies by the hosting states were not always adequate; hence, envoys had to live of his own. Most of the Safavid missions to Venice were of economic character rather than diplomatic, and naturally, the majority of the envoys was merchants and usually their retinues were comprised of merchants. As they often carried goods with them to trade on their way, either on their ruler's account or for themselves, it seems that reliance on one's own provisions and funds could hardly constitute a problem for them.

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<sup>123</sup> Bülent Arı, "Early Ottoman Diplomacy: Ad Hoc Period", in *Ottoman Diplomacy. Conventional or Unconventional?*, edit. by A. Nuri Yurdusev Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004, 36–65 p.59.

<sup>124</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XIX, col. 330.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX, col. 331.

<sup>126</sup> "...detto che egli non veniva honorato dalla maniera che fu l'altra volta, et come erano honorati gli altri chiansi che vengono dalla Porta". ASVe, CEP, fil. 3, c. 294r – v (25 June 1580).

<sup>127</sup> ASVe, CC, reg. 1, c.93v (10 July 1580).

<sup>128</sup> Maria Pia Pedani, "A Culture of Trust. Ottoman Merchants and Venetian Notaries in the Early Modern period", in *Venetians and Ottomans in the Early Modern Age, Essays on Economic and Social Connected History*, edit., by Anna Valerio, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, Venezia, 2018, p. 45.

## 7. Characteristics of the embassies to Venice

### 7.1. Composition of the envoys' retinue

Ottoman envoys were mostly chosen from among the members of *çavuş*<sup>129</sup> corps. Their retinues were composed above all, of merchants, who had often joined the envoy on the Dalmatian coast, before his sailing the Adriatic. Travelling to Venice together with an Ottoman ambassador gave these merchants a possibility of making good transactions.<sup>130</sup> Prior to the 1530s, the envoy and his retinue had been exempted from all import-export taxes. However, in the 1530s, the Venetian government put an end to this practice by exempting from taxes only the ambassador's own merchandise.<sup>131</sup> Besides the merchants, in most cases, the envoys' retinues included interpreters and janissaries. For example, two janissaries were among the attendants of Davud çavuş in his mission to Venice in the late spring of 1600.<sup>132</sup>

### 7.2. Length of stay in Venice

The Safavid envoys stayed in Venice for an average period of two to three months with an exception of Fathi bey whose sojourn in the lagoon city exceeded six months. In the sixteenth century, Ottoman envoys' length of stay in Venice mostly ranged from twenty to thirty days depending on the nature of the mission. However, with the passage of time, duration of their sojourn was increased and in the seventeenth century it became two months in average.<sup>133</sup>

As a rule, with a last audience in the College, the foreign diplomat was dismissed. The reply letter was delivered to him and he was allowed to leave the city, as it would have been impossible for him to leave without the authorization (*licentia*) of the Republic. Following these procedures, boarding for the Dalmatian coast could, however, be delayed for a few days due to unfavorable weather conditions or sometimes, by the will of the same envoy who tried to stay in the city for as long as possible to take advantage of the hospitality of the Republic.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> For çavuşes of the Ottoman Imperial Council see: Murat Uluskan, "Divan-ı Hümayun Çavuşları," Unpublished PhD dissertation, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2004.

<sup>130</sup> Maria Pia Pedani, 'Ambassadors' travels from the East to Venice', *Annali di Ca Foscari*, 48, 3 (2009), p. 189.

<sup>131</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 85-86.

<sup>132</sup> ASVe, CEP, reg. 14, c. 111r (15 May 1600).

<sup>133</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 94.

<sup>134</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 94.

### 7.3. *The physical appearance and age of the envoys*

Venetians paid particular attention to the physical appearance of the envoys. For example Venetian diarist Marin Sanudo describes Ali bey as “old and practical man” (*bomo vecchio e pratico*)<sup>135</sup>; Sinan Çavuş as “white-faced, big and handsome man” (*bomo, grando e grosso biancho et bello di fazza*) and Yunus bey as “nice and big man” (*bel homo..., grando*).<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, their clothing frequently caught the attention of Sanudo: “dressed in black velvet” (*vestito di veludo negro*)<sup>137</sup>; “dressed in gilded robe and a big fez on his head” (*vestito con una zacha d’ oro e una gran fessa in capo*); dressed in a robe of crimson satin (*vestito di caxacha di raxo cremexin*).<sup>138</sup> Without giving further details, Sanudo described the members of the second Safavid embassy of 1509 dressed as “Moors in *Agemid*”.<sup>139</sup>

From Haji Mahammad’s discourse in Venice, it appears that he was eighty years old. He was not the only elder envoy sent to Europe, Ali Qulu bey Möhrdar, who visited Rome in late August of 1609, was described as aged 73, but “strong and very jovial” (*robuste è molto gioviale*)<sup>140</sup> Fathi bey was reported to be about forty years old.<sup>141</sup> Venetian public interpreter, Giacomo Nores described Khoja Sefer as aged about thirty-two.<sup>142</sup> The case of Haji Mahammad suggests that the envoy’s age determined by the nature of the mission, as the Safavid court tended to assign important tasks to the elderly envoys. Ottoman ambassadors were usually not young. The Ali Bey sipahi, which arrived in Venice in 1504, was sixty years old, while the dragoman Ali in 1514 was fifty years old.<sup>143</sup>

### 7.4. *Knowledge of foreign languages*

Safavid envoys were relied on public interpreter of the Republic during the audiences at the College. We have only cursory information referring to the knowledge of Italian language of Khoja Shahsuvar. According to the testimony given by one of the Venetian brokers, Shahsuvar could speak and understand “a little bit” of Italian.<sup>144</sup> In contrast, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, four official

<sup>135</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XVII, col. 451.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, LII, col. 367.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, col. 373-374.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, col. 255.

<sup>140</sup> BAV, Urb.lat.1077, f.415v (29 August 1609).

<sup>141</sup> ASVe, Quarentia criminal, fil. 114, 1603 (03 March 1603), unpaginated.

<sup>142</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 18, (30 January 1609, *more veneto*), unpaginated.

<sup>143</sup> M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p.32.

<sup>144</sup> ASVe, Savi all’eresia (Santo Ufficio), busta 72 (August 1620), unpaginated.

interpreters of the Ottoman court of were sent to Venice. Among them, Ali bey, despite always speaking in Turkish during the audiences with the Dodge, “could spoke Italian very well and also know Latin.”<sup>145</sup> Another envoy-interpreter Ibrahim bey used Italian in his informal communication with the Venetian officials who was assigned to accompany him during his sojourn in January 1567.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, it was quite common for the Ottoman envoys to have an interpreter in his mission.<sup>147</sup>

## 8. Conclusion

Both the Ottoman and Safavid envoys usually were graciously received in Venice. However, the degree of the Venetian hospitality was subject to changes and varied in accordance to the importance of the incoming mission and overall nature of its relations with the Ottomans and Safavids. Venetians attached particular importance to the relations with the Ottomans and it was reflected in the welcome and reception ceremonies of the Ottoman envoys in Venice. Symbolic elements in reception ceremonies were essential to the expression of diplomatic hierarchies. Rich clothing worn by the reception ceremony participants; luxuriant banquets held in Arsenal, which was the heart of the Venetian naval industry; amount of the gifts and maintenance allowances all carried symbolic meaning and served to display the economic prosperity and military might, as well as the international status of the Republic.

The Ottoman envoy's welcome at the Lido by Senate members, his solemn procession towards the College, and his public audience with the dodge were meticulously orchestrated to ensure that the respect shown to a diplomat, thus indirectly to his sovereign. It appears from the receptions of the Ottoman and Safavid diplomats in Venice that during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the ceremonial positions of the sultan's envoys were equal or above that of the *Qızılbaş* representatives.

With few exceptions, Safavid missions to Venice were principally trade missions rather than diplomatic, as vast majority of them had a commercial dimension. Safavid envoys, combining the roles of royal agent and merchant, were tasked to sell royal silk and and to purchase the things needed for royal household. Merchant-envoys enjoyed special duty-free trade privileges granted by Venetian to foreign envoys. Unlike the Safavids, the Ottoman envoys to Venice were drawn from members of the *çavuş* corps (predominantly *Dîvân-ı Hümayun çavuşları*), imperial interpreters, and members of the Ottoman civic and military bureaucracy.

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<sup>145</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, XVII, col. 522; XXV, col. 72.

<sup>146</sup> ASVe, CEP, fil. 1, (January 1567) c. 229r.

<sup>147</sup> M. Sanudo, *I Diarii*, V, col. 991; M.P. Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore*, p. 27.

Usually, Safavid envoys travelled to Venice with small retinues, which never exceeded ten persons. In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, unlike their Safavid counterparts, Ottoman diplomats were accompanied by a large group of people, particularly, for important missions, such as the peace negotiations or the accession to the throne of a new sovereign. As it is evident from the Asad bey's case in 1600, in its treatment of the Safavid envoys, Venetian government pursued a cautious policy and tried not to antagonize the Ottomans. Furthermore, the Ottoman factor had enduring impact both on the nature and on the dynamics of the Safavid-Venetian relations.

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